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Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)

Report of the Second Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Hussam Edin **A'Ala** (Syrian Arab Republic)

I. Introduction

1. At its 3rd plenary meeting, on 17 September 1999, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include in the agenda of its fifty-fourth session the item entitled "Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)" and to allocate it to the Second Committee.

2. The Second Committee considered the item at its 11th, 12th, 15th and 48th meetings, on 12 and 19 October and 9 December 1999. An account of the Committee's consideration of the item is contained in the relevant summary records (A/C.2/54/SR.11, 12, 15 and 48). Attention is also drawn to the general debate held by the Committee at its 3rd to 8th meetings, from 6 to 8 October (see A/C.2/54/SR.3-8).

3. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006) (A/54/316);

(b) Letter dated 17 May 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General transmitting the text of the Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice for the Twenty-first Century, adopted by the Appeal for Peace Conference, held at The Hague from 12 to 15 May 1999 (A/54/98);

(c) Letter dated 15 October 1999 from the Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting the communiqué of the meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Heads of Delegation of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held in New York on 23 September 1999 (A/54/469-S/1999/1063);

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(d) Letter dated 4 November 1999 from the representatives of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation and Tajikistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting the text of the Moscow Declaration of heads of States Parties to the Treaty on the Customs Union and Unified Economic Space, signed in Moscow on 26 October 1999 (A/54/535).

4. At the 11th meeting, on 12 October, the Deputy Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs made an introductory statement (see A/C.2/54/SR.11).

II. Consideration of draft resolutions A/C.2/54/L.3 and A/C.2/54/L.69

5. At the 15th meeting, on 19 October, the representative of Guyana, on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China, introduced a draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty" (A/C.2/54/L.3), which read:

"*The General Assembly*,

"*Recalling* its resolutions 50/107 of 20 December 1995 and 53/198 of 15 December 1998 regarding the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006), and all of its other resolutions relating to international cooperation for the eradication of poverty in the developing countries,

"*Recalling also* the declarations and programmes of action of the United Nations major conferences and summits in the 1990s as they relate to the eradication of poverty,

"*Taking note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006),

"*Expressing its deep concern* that efforts to reduce global poverty, in particular in the developing countries, have been severely constrained by the slowdown in the global economy, negative effects of globalization, financial crises and declining commodity prices,

"*Expressing further deep concern* that the number of people living in extreme poverty continues to increase, with women and children constituting the majority and the most affected,

"*Expressing concern* about the increasing economic disparities within and among countries and its negative impact on the national and international efforts to eradicate poverty,

"*Recognizing* that the combined effects of natural disasters, conflicts, entrenched poverty, diseases, especially the malaria and the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome epidemic, and lack of proper education affect the economic prospects of and efforts to eradicate poverty in the most severely affected countries, especially in Africa,

"*Recognizing also* that globalization poses severe challenges and risks, particularly for developing countries, at a time when they are intensifying their efforts towards achieving sustained economic growth and directing their national policies towards realizing the objective of eradicating poverty,

"*Recognizing further* that, while it is the responsibility of States to attain social development, the international community should support the efforts of the developing countries in eradicating poverty,

"*Emphasizing* the need to further strengthen the efforts of international organizations, agencies, funds, programmes and bodies of the United Nations system within their respective mandates to implement measures and actions to eradicate poverty as well as those of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, within the framework of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty,

"*Expressing its appreciation* to the developed countries that have reached the target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for overall official development assistance,

"*Noting with appreciation* the Cologne Initiative and the decision taken by the Bretton Woods institutions to make poverty eradication the priority in their programmes and policy advice, and the enhancement introduced to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative with a view to achieving faster, deeper and broader debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries,

"1. *Reiterates* that the main objective of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty is to achieve the goal of eradicating absolute poverty and reducing overall poverty substantially in the world through decisive national action and international cooperation;

"2. *Reiterates also* the call for strengthened efforts at all levels to implement fully and effectively the relevant resolutions and decisions of the United Nations and, in this context, calls for specific action aimed at achieving tangible results annually with a view to realizing the objectives of the Decade as soon as possible;

"3. *Stresses* the importance of tackling the root causes of poverty and the necessity of meeting the basic needs of all and, in this context, emphasizes the fundamental role of strong and sustained economic growth that favours the poor, creates substantive expansion in productive opportunities and employment, increases incomes and promotes equitable income distribution for the eradication of poverty;

"4. *Calls upon* all Governments to incorporate, as they deem appropriate, the recommendations made by the Secretary-General for action and initiatives for poverty eradication towards the new millennium in designing and implementing their national poverty alleviation strategies and exploring policies best suited to their national circumstances with a view to maximizing the effect of poverty reduction and eradication;

"5. *Urges* strengthened international efforts to assist developing countries in their efforts to eradicate poverty, including by creating an enabling environment to facilitate their integration into the world economy, improving their market access, facilitating the flow of financial resources, and initiating innovative debt-relief mechanisms for the developing countries, so that they can share equally in the benefits of globalization and cope with its negative effects as well as avoid marginalization;

"6. *Calls upon* all countries to formulate and implement national strategies and programmes, including setting time-bound targets for poverty reduction;

"7. *Reaffirms* that mainstreaming a gender perspective in an active and visible manner into all policies and programmes aimed at poverty eradication at both the national and international levels is key to a successful poverty eradication strategy;

"8. *Calls upon* the developing countries to fulfil the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for overall official development assistance and, within that target, to earmark 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of their gross domestic product for the least developed countries;

"9. *Also calls upon* the developing countries to facilitate the transfer of technology and access to knowledge on preferential and concessional terms in order to enable the developing countries to benefit from the phenomenon of globalization, which is influenced in large measure by technology;

"10. *Encourages* Governments to adopt policies promoting the effective use and development of microcredit, and calls upon the international community, in particular the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, international financial institutions and regional organizations to support and further develop other microfinance instruments;

"11. *Welcomes* the efforts made by the United Nations system to give priority to poverty eradication and to enhance coordination in this regard, and encourages those agencies of the United Nations system as well as other partners in development to continue to support Member States through *inter alia*, advocacy actions to generate political support within the donor countries, for the achievement of the objectives of the Decade;

"12. *Calls upon* the developed countries that have not done so to provide the required financing for the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative in order to contribute to the achievement of poverty reduction in a sustainable manner in these countries;

"13. *Encourages* the relevant international organizations to examine ways and means of assisting the growing number of middle-income developing countries facing mounting poverty levels resulting from their current difficulties in servicing their external debt and hampering their efforts to effectively combat poverty;

"14. *Decides* to promote the examination in all relevant intergovernmental forums of ways and means to integrate poverty reduction objectives in the context of the development concerns of developing countries into ongoing discussions on the international financial development architecture;

"15. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit a report at its fifty-fifth session on the progress made in the implementation of measures, recommendations and activities related to the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, including a thorough examination of the impact of globalization and interdependence on poverty eradication, recommendations for possible actions and initiatives for poverty eradication in the process of globalization, as well as on the implementation of the present resolution;

"16. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-fifth session the item entitled 'Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)'."

6. At the 48th meeting, on 9 December, the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Daúl Matute (Peru), introduced a draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty" (A/C.2/54/L.69), which he submitted on the basis of informal consultations held on draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.3.

7. In introducing the draft resolution, the Vice-Chairman orally revised it as follows:

(a) In operative paragraph 13, the words "production and self-employment" were replaced by the words "productive self-employment";

(b) In operative paragraph 19, the words "other highly indebted middle-income debtor countries" were replaced by the words "other highly indebted middle-income countries"; in the same paragraph, the words "high liquidity constraints" were replaced by the words "higher liquidity constraints".

8. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.69, as orally revised (see para. 10).

9. In the light of the adoption of draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.69, draft resolution A/C.2/54/L.3 was withdrawn by its sponsors.

III. Recommendation of the Second Committee

10. The Second Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 50/107 of 20 December 1995 and 53/198 of 15 December 1998 regarding the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006), and all of its other resolutions relating to international cooperation for the eradication of poverty in the developing countries,

Recalling also the declarations and programmes of action of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the 1990s as they relate to the eradication of poverty,

Taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006),[1]

Expressing its deep concern that the number of people living in extreme poverty continues to increase, with women and children constituting the majority and the most affected group,

Expressing its deep concern also that efforts to reduce poverty have been severely constrained because of the slowing down of economic growth in developing countries, as a result of, *inter alia* and in particular, the 1997-1998 financial crisis and declining commodity prices, and noting that while some of the most visible effects of the crisis are being overcome in some regions and sectors, there is a need to sustain and expand the momentum of recovery,

Recognizing that, while the process of globalization brings with it opportunities, it poses new challenges and risks for developing countries, in particular the least developed among them, at a time when they are intensifying their efforts to achieve sustained economic growth and directing their national policies towards the eradication of poverty through the implementation of comprehensive strategies, policies and programmes, including those with a long-term perspective,

[1] A/54/316.

Recognizing also that, while the rate of poverty in some countries has been reduced, some developing countries and disadvantaged groups are being marginalized, others are at risk of being marginalized and effectively excluded from the benefits of globalization, and there is increased income disparity among and within countries, thereby constraining efforts to eradicate poverty,

Recognizing further that the combined effects of natural disasters, conflicts, entrenched poverty, disease, especially malaria and the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome epidemic, and lack of proper education affect the economic prospects of and efforts to eradicate poverty in the most severely affected countries, especially in Africa,

Recognizing that, while it is the primary responsibility of States to attain social development, the international community should support the efforts of the developing countries to eradicate poverty and to ensure basic social protection,

Expressing its appreciation to the developed countries that have agreed to and have reached the target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for overall official development assistance,

Emphasizing the need to strengthen further the efforts of international organizations, agencies, funds, programmes and bodies of the United Nations system, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund within their respective mandates, as well as the efforts of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, to implement measures and take action to eradicate poverty within the framework of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty,

Noting with appreciation the debt initiative launched by the Group of Seven major industrialized countries, at its meeting held at Cologne, Germany, from 18 to 20 June 1999, the decisions taken by the international community to assign priority to the eradication of poverty in the programmes and policy advice of the Bretton Woods institutions and the enhancement to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative introduced with a view to achieving more rapid, deeper and broader debt relief for the heavily indebted poor countries,

1. *Reiterates* that the main objective of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty is to achieve the goal of eradicating absolute poverty and reducing overall poverty substantially in the world through decisive national action and international cooperation;

2. *Reiterates also* the call for strengthened efforts at all levels to implement fully and effectively the relevant resolutions and decisions of the United Nations and all agreements and commitments adopted at major United Nations conferences and summits organized since 1990 as they relate to the eradication of poverty, and, in this context, calls for specific action aimed at achieving tangible results through an output-oriented approach to attaining the objectives of the Decade as soon as possible;

3. *Reaffirms* that, within the context of overall action for the eradication of poverty, special attention should be given to the multidimensional nature of poverty and the national and international conditions and policies that are conducive to its eradication by fostering, *inter alia*, the social and economic integration of people living in poverty, thus empowering them to participate in decision-making with regard to the policies that affect them, to the promotion and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, including the right to development, and to an efficient, transparent and accountable public service and administration;

4. *Stresses* the importance of tackling the root causes of poverty and the necessity of meeting the basic needs of all and, in this context, emphasizes the fundamental role, in the eradication of poverty, of strong and sustained economic growth that favours the poor, creates substantive expansion in productive opportunities and employment, increases incomes, promotes equitable income distribution and minimizes environmental degradation;

5. *Recognizes* the importance of adopting appropriate policy responses to the challenges of globalization at the national level, in particular by pursuing sound and stable domestic policies, including sound macroeconomic and social policies, in order to realize the objective of eradicating poverty;

6. *Calls upon* all Governments to incorporate, as they deem appropriate, the recommendations made by the Secretary-General for possible action and initiatives for poverty eradication towards the new millennium[2] in the design and implementation of their national poverty alleviation strategies and to explore policies best suited to their national circumstances with a view to maximizing efforts aimed at poverty reduction and eradication;

7. *Reaffirms* that the causes of poverty should be addressed in the context of sectoral strategies, such as those on environment, food security, population, migration, health, shelter, the development of human resources including education, fresh water, rural development and productive employment, and of the specific needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in such a way as to increase opportunities and choices for people living in poverty and to enable them to build and strengthen their assets so as to achieve social and economic integration;

8. *Urges* the strengthening of international assistance to developing countries in their efforts to alleviate poverty, including by creating an enabling environment that would facilitate the integration of developing countries into the world economy, improving their market access, facilitating the flow of financial resources and implementing fully and effectively all initiatives already launched regarding debt relief for developing countries, and emphasizes that the international community should consider further measures that would lead to effective, equitable, development-oriented and durable solutions to the external debt and debt-servicing problems of developing countries so that they can share equally in the benefits of globalization, cope with its negative effects, avoid being marginalized in the process of globalization and achieve full integration into the world economy;

9. *Calls upon* all countries to formulate and implement outcome-oriented national strategies and programmes, including setting time-bound targets for poverty reduction, and, in this context, notes the efforts being made to achieve the target of reducing by one half, by 2015, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty, which requires strengthened national action and international assistance;

10. *Reaffirms* that all Governments and the United Nations system should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes aimed at the eradication of poverty, at both the national and international levels, and encourages the use of gender analysis as a tool for the integration of a gender dimension into planning the implementation of policies, strategies and programmes for the eradication of poverty;

11. *Calls upon* the developed countries to strengthen their efforts to achieve, as soon as possible, the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for overall

[2] A/54/316, sect. V.

official development assistance and, where agreed, within that target, to earmark 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of their gross national product for the least developed countries;

12. *Emphasizes* the importance of increasing the control of the poor over resources, including land, skills, knowledge, capital and social connections;

13. *Emphasizes also* the role of microcredit as an important anti-poverty tool that promotes the generation of productive self-employment and empowers people living in poverty, especially women, and therefore encourages Governments to adopt policies that support the development and capacity of microcredit institutions, and calls upon the international community, in particular the relevant organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and international and regional financial institutions involved in the eradication of poverty, to support and explore the incorporation of the microcredit approach into their programmes and the further development, as appropriate, of other microfinancing instruments;

14. *Calls upon* the developed countries, by means of intensified and effective cooperation with developing countries, to promote capacity-building and to facilitate access to and transfer of technologies and corresponding knowledge, in particular to developing countries, on favourable terms, including concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed, taking into account the need to protect intellectual property rights, as well as the special needs of developing countries, by identifying and implementing practical steps to ensure the achievement of progress in this regard and to assist developing countries in their efforts to eradicate poverty in an era influenced in large measure by technology;

15. *Emphasizes* the critical role of both formal and non-formal education and training and basic education in the empowerment of those living in poverty, notes the importance of the world forum on education to be held at Dakar in April 2000, and invites the United Nations system, in particular the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund, to propose measures aimed at enhancing the role of the United Nations system, including the World Bank, in helping Member States to provide effective and equitable education for all;

16. *Welcomes* the efforts made by the United Nations system to assign priority to the eradication of poverty and to enhance coordination and, in this regard, encourages those agencies of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, and other partners in development to continue to support all Member States in carrying forward their own strategy for the achievement of the objectives of the Decade;

17. *Reaffirms* the importance of agreeing on a mutual commitment of interested developed and developing country partners to allocate, on average, 20 per cent of official development assistance and 20 per cent of the national budget, respectively, to basic social programmes, and welcomes the efforts made to implement the 20/20 initiative,[3] which emphasizes that promoting access for all to basic social services is essential for sustainable and equitable development and is an integral part of the strategy for the eradication of poverty;

18. *Welcomes* the Cologne debt initiative, launched in June 1999, which called for substantial additional financing, and recognizes the importance of fair burden-sharing among creditors and the recent decisions of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank on the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative, which should provide deeper, broader and faster debt relief that will contribute to the reduction of poverty in a sustainable manner in those countries;

[3] See A/51/140, annex.

19. *Recognizes* the difficulties of highly indebted middle-income developing countries and other highly indebted middle-income countries in meeting their external debt and debt-servicing obligations and notes the worsening situation in some of them in the context, *inter alia*, of higher liquidity constraints, which may require debt treatment including, as appropriate, debt-reduction measures that will assist them in their efforts effectively to combat poverty;

20. *Encourages* the continued examination in all relevant intergovernmental forums of ways and means to integrate poverty reduction objectives and strategies into discussions on international financial and development issues;

21. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-fifth session on the progress made in the implementation of measures, recommendations and activities relating to the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, including a thorough examination of the impact of globalization on the eradication of poverty, recommendations for possible action and initiatives for the eradication of poverty and proposals for better coordination of action taken by the United Nations system, as well as on the implementation of the present resolution;

22. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-fifth session the item entitled "Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006)".